
Title: Feel Good Fridays: Encouraging Healthier Professionals

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Situation: In March of 2020, extension professionals throughout the nation experienced sheltering in place restrictions, due to COVID-19. According to the CDC (2020), “Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety” (para. 1). As extension professionals were surveyed across the nation, professionals reported feeling anxious, overwhelmed, stressed, and stretched thin. This came at a time when communities throughout the nation needed the response of public servants, possibly more than ever. As National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals (NAE4-HYDP) members further reported the need for coping strategies, virtual teaching tools and ideas, and a place to share with others in similar situations, the association saw a great need of their members.

Response: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NAE4-HYDP Professional Development Committee’s Creating a Healthier You Working Group created a webinar series and supplemental resources focused on uplifting extension professionals. The webinar series, Feel Good Fridays, was created to spread positivity and mindfulness strategies. The 7-member team collaborated to coordinate 10 national webinars during the first five months of social distancing, co-authored two tip sheets and resources for professionals, developed and launched a program evaluation, compiled a quarantine resourcefulness cookbook, produced e-news articles for *The Pulse*, and created a virtual wellness challenge competition offered to the membership of the association to encourage professional wellness. Working group members, including professionals focusing in healthy living and facilitation, from Purdue University, the University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of West Virginia, and Virginia Tech collaborated to co-coordinate and facilitate the national webinars, including topic identification, call for presenters, and content development. Sessions were taught through Zoom video-conferencing and live-streamed to social media.

- **Results/Impacts:** Collectively, the series gained pre-registrations in the NAE4-HYDP system of more than 1000, a live audience of more than 630, and social media views that topped more than 6,400.
- Two-hundred and nine professionals across the nation completed the program evaluation. Of the respondents, 26 individuals reported registering for sessions but were unable to attend.
- Of the respondents reporting their attendance:
 - 87% agreed that Feel Good Friday webinars helped them consider healthy practices (n=105)
 - 82% agreed that Feel Good Friday webinars helped them cope with sheltering in place (n=105)
 - 78% agreed that Feel Good Friday webinars increased their personal positivity. (n=104)
 - 88% agreed that Feel Good Friday webinars gave them professional encouragement. (n=105)
 - 88% agreed that Feel Good Friday webinars gave them personal encouragement. (n=105)

- Unsolicited quote following a session:
 “Thank you to your group appreciate what you are sharing to help us be less stressed and working smarter not harder!”
- Quotes from the survey:
 - “These sessions helped me as a professional and as a person with coping during social distancing. The networking, connections, and uplifting attitudes helped my attitude.”
 - “These sessions have been extremely beneficial to me personally and professionally, and the presenter team did a fantastic job facilitating the different workshops. The topics were timely and offered a good variety of useful information. They were the highlight of my week!”
 - “It was fun and enlightening opportunity to hear from professionals across the nation. Thank you!”
 - “It has been fun to discover and see what passions and interests motivate colleagues from around the country and to have some professional and personal development that makes me feel a little lighter about life.”
 - “I looked forward to Feel Good Fridays each week because it was a way to add a personal connection (and positivity) during a disconnected time in the U.S.!”
 - “So appreciative of colleagues helping colleagues as we are experiencing COVID together and finding ways to make us stronger to come out better on the other side.”
 - “This was a very good program that was so timely for the environment we are currently experiencing and living every day. I looked forward to the webinars and gained many valuable insights.”
- 84% of survey respondents (who may or may not have attended) noted that they would like to see more Feel Good Fridays offered in the future.

Reference: Centers for Disease Control. (2020, July 1). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Coping with stress. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>